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warning. In the vast majority of cases it is preceded by unmistakable symptoms. So far has spectroscopic science advanced that it is able to classify stars very much as medical science classifies men, into the "healthy," the "doubtful," and the "dangerous." Our sun, we are rejoiced to learn, is rated among the "healthy." Its eleven-year periods of spots are not the morbid intermittence of fever, but the natural pulsations of its great, glowing heart.

Even if its intensity of radiation should rise far above the usual maximum, it would not necessarily be destructive of planetary life. Tyndall has shown by a series of more than a thousand experiments that an extremely slight change in the constitution of the atmosphere would make a very great difference in its heat-absorbing and heat-transmitting power. A little increase in the average amount of watery vapor held in suspension, for instance, would change a tropical to a temperate climate. In its oceans, therefore, the earth has a shield against the fiery darts of her great lord and master. If they should grow too fierce, like a woman she would quench them with *salt water*.

We may therefore contemplate the dangers to which the solar system is exposed with the same calm unconcern with which the man in robust health contemplates his own possible untimely demise.

E. P. JACKSON.

"GREATER NEW YORK."

THE question of creating a huge American city with the island of Manhattan as its centre, which was under consideration at the recent session of the New York Legislature, is one of more than local importance. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that it is a question of national interest.

If the plan agreed upon by the commission appointed in 1890 to consider the subject should be adopted and carried into effect, "Greater New York"—as the projected city is sometimes rather magniloquently called—would surpass Paris in point of population, and would rank second only to London among the great cities of the world. It is indisputable that there would be something agreeable to American pride in an achievement with such a result.

But there is another consideration of no small moment in the minds of not a few persons. It is evident, taking into consideration the rapid growth of Chicago as shown by the last census, that it will not be many years before that marvellous metropolis of the West comes into close competition with New York on the score of numbers. When that time is at hand, it is confidently expected that a wonderful impulse in the direction of consolidation will make itself felt, and that New York and all its environs will make haste, by the process of wholesale annexation, to ward off the threatened calamity of the removal of the country's most populous city from the Atlantic seaboard to the prairies of the West.

The bill prepared and reported by the commission already mentioned was passed by only one branch of the Legislature of the present year; but the commission still remains in existence, and will doubtless prepare another measure for presentation to the next Legislature. The matter is now fairly before the public,—though profound interest in it seems to be confined to a small group of persons,—and the agitation is likely to be kept up until something like an authoritative decision of the question is arrived at. The pass-

age of this year's bill, however, would by no means have meant the consolidation forthwith of the cities, towns, and country districts around New York with that metropolis.

Before proceeding further let us inquire into the scope and purpose of this measure. It simply authorized the members of the commission to "prepare and submit to the Legislature a charter for the incorporation, government, and administration of a city to comprehend" the city of New York; the county of Kings, which includes the city of Brooklyn; the whole of Richmond County (Staten Island); a portion of Westchester County lying directly north of the present northerly boundary of New York city; and a considerable section of Queens County, on Long Island, including Long Island City, which adjoins Brooklyn on the northeast. This combined municipality was to be known as the city of New York, and its government and administration were to be vested in one chief executive officer and two legislative boards; the several municipal administrative departments to be, as far as possible, each under a single head.

It may be frankly admitted that the project is one that appeals to sentiment and the imagination rather than to the practical judgment. The burden of proof lies, of course, with the advocates of consolidation. There are no evidences of any strong popular sentiment in favor of the commission's plan, or of any plan—though no other has been formulated—for bringing about the same result. So far as I have been able to ascertain, the general feeling on the subject is that, while New York is quite willing to take its neighbors to its ample breast, the question is not for New York to decide, but should be left to the determination of the several communities which are asked to sink their identity in the greater mass of the metropolis. That Brooklyn, for instance, is willing to give up its name and autonomy, and become no more than an outlying district of New York, is one of the things that the friends of annexation have as yet failed to prove. The questions that naturally arise in the minds of Brooklyn people when the subject is opened are: What have we to gain by consolidation? Are we to have any lower taxes? Are we to get a better local administration? What compensation are we to receive beyond the merely sentimental one of being citizens of the second largest city in the world? It must be admitted that these are practical, even vital, questions; and no satisfactory answer to them has been given.

The weak point in the American system of self-government is the government of cities. As that keen-sighted and philosophic observer Professor Bryce has said: "There is no denying that the government of cities is the one conspicuous failure of the United States. The deficiencies of the National government tell but little for evil on the welfare of the people. The faults of the State governments are insignificant compared with the extravagance, corruption, and mismanagement which mark the administration of most of the great cities. For these evils are not confined to one or two cities. . . . There is not a city with a population exceeding 200,000 where the poison germs have not sprung into a vigorous life; and in some of the smaller ones, down to 70,000, it needs no microscope to note the results of their growth."

Now, if this is the case with the cities that we already have,—and undeniably it is so,—what would be the result of creating a city once-and-a-half as large as the largest that now exists in America? Would it not be merely to multiply the evils that have already had so rank a growth? This is a question that must give the consolidationists pause. So far is the problem of

municipal government from being solved, and so notoriously bad is the administration of New York at present, that the thought of properly governing a city nearly twice as large is nothing short of appalling.

Nor is there any assurance that the already overburdened taxpayers of the cities adjacent to Manhattan Island would find any relief in being swallowed up by their big neighbor; while it is almost certain that the residents of the rural communities which it is proposed to absorb would find their burdens on this score sensibly increased, without any corresponding advantages. And, furthermore, there is the danger that the annexed municipalities and districts might not receive wholly fair treatment in the matter of expenditures and improvements if they should intrust their fate to the tender mercies of New York, which would necessarily control the purse-strings of the future city.

After all, the main question is whether Brooklyn, Long Island City, Staten Island, etc., desire to be added to New York. Without doubt New York would not refuse to take them in should they come knocking at its doors. To compare a thing not small with one greater, the situation is very much the same as that of Canada in its relation to the United States. Our people are generally agreed that they will make no effort to capture what Mr. Wiman is never weary of calling the "greater half of the continent"; and they are likewise generally agreed that as soon as a movement toward annexation comes from Canada, the United States stands ready to do its part towards enlarging its borders on the north.

So it is, or, at any rate, ought to be, with New York and its neighbors. The movement toward consolidation should proceed not from it, but from them. Thus far they have shown almost no desire in that direction. A popular vote on the subject in Brooklyn, for example, would in all probability disclose a very large majority in favor of retaining that city on the map of the Empire State. The failure of the bill in the Legislature a few months ago provoked no lamentations. Consolidation is, in fact, the *fad* of a few men who are fond of publicity and of posing as benefactors of their generation.

EMERSON PALMER.

HARNESSING THE RAIN-CLOUD.

It is wonderful in how many different directions, all at once, scientific realities are superseding ignorant superstitions. We laugh at the predictions of the alarmist who fixes the date of the world's destruction by a tortured interpretation of some Scriptural cryptogram, but the facts of solar physics have a bearing upon the subject which is no laughing matter. The Indian believes that his big medicine-man can open and shut the flood-gates of the heavens at his pleasure, and some of his white brethren still hold a similar belief—a belief that Tyndall has so irreverently ridiculed in his famous challenge.

But though science can admit neither big medicine nor prayer among her "motors," though neither has any demonstrable physical connection with the atmosphere or the clouds, the same cannot be said of the agencies with which General Dyrenforth is experimenting under the patronage of the government. He proposes to bring down the rain, not by charms or incantations, but by perfectly natural means—the simultaneous or serial explosion